

SPECIAL ORDERS

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mrs. BLACKBURN). Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 7, 2003, and under a previous order of the House, the following Members will be recognized for 5 minutes each.

REINSTATE ASSAULT WEAPONS BAN

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from New York (Mrs. MCCARTHY) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mrs. MCCARTHY of New York. Madam Speaker, assault weapons go back on to our streets in 84 days. These weapons of war mow down our police officers and destroy families every day.

Just last week, an SKS assault rifle, and this is what it looks like, mowed down three police officers in Alabama and killed them. The SKS can fire up to 35 rounds per minute and pierce police body armor. Montgomery Police Chief John Wilson confirmed that the vests that the officers wore offered almost no protection against this high-powered assault rifle.

Fifty-eight-year-old Carlos Owen, with 26 years on the force and nearing retirement, never had a chance. He and two of his fellow officers died in a hail of bullets.

But that has not stopped the National Rifle Association from engaging in their old dirty tricks. The NRA Web site says data from police experts must be deliberately avoided by those pushing assault weapons bills. Actually, the data is pretty clear on assault weapons. In one of every five police-officer killings, an assault weapon is the choice.

The NRA is so blind to the truth on assault weapons that they are also engaged in a smear campaign against Jim and Sara Brady. The Brady's "error"? Telling the truth about President Reagan's former support for the assault weapons ban in a television interview. The NRA called their interview "shameless" and "deliberate misinformation."

As we continue to remember President Reagan, I would like to set the record straight on his contributions to gun safety. The importation of rapid-fire shot guns was first outlawed under President Reagan.

In 1994, he joined former Presidents Ford and Carter in calling on Congress to pass the assault weapons ban.

During the close vote on the assault weapons ban that year, President Reagan made calls to undecided Members urging for a "yes" vote.

The ban passed by two votes, and at least one Member said Reagan's call prompted him to vote "yes."

President Reagan knew the importance of keeping military-style weapons off our streets and out of our communities.

The assault weapons ban is a commonsense law that almost all Ameri-

cans, gun owners included, do support. It is unfortunate that the NRA feels more strongly about firing up its membership than telling the truth.

Let me say this: each day that comes closer to having this assault weapons ban expire is each day we come closer to seeing deaths in our communities and on our streets. I have never tried to do anything to take away someone's right to own a gun, but I do know assault weapons do not belong on our streets. That is a responsibility that all Americans, in my opinion, and gun owners should take upon themselves.

The American people can do something about this. They can contact their Congressman, their Senator, and certainly the White House. President Bush has promised to sign the assault weapons ban if it gets on his desk. We know that this Congress has to have the bill up on the floor so we can have a vote on it before it will ever get to the President's desk.

I am asking the President for his help. I am asking him to start calling on the Members of Congress, as President Reagan did, and let us get this assault weapons ban in place. Let us make sure our police officers are not put into more risk than they already have to be in.

When we talk about possible terror cells in this country, do we actually want gangs, drug dealers, possibly terrorists being able to get assault weapons? This is not what America is. Assault weapons belong in the hands of only our military. They are guns that are used to mow down people as fast as possible. Why do we need these guns? Let us not forget the large-capacity clips. Right now, under the ban, clips are only supposed to hold 10 bullets. If this ban goes back to the way it was, we can have 35, we can have 50, we can have 100, whatever the clip will hold. That is not where we want to be.

I strongly urge the American people to get involved in this.

RELIGIOUS FREEDOM OF SPEECH

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from North Carolina (Mr. JONES) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. JONES of North Carolina. Madam Speaker, I am again on the floor tonight because in this country, the greatest Nation in the world, our ministers, priests, rabbis, and clerics cannot have the freedom of speech to talk about the policies and political issues of the day.

The history on that is simple. Prior to 1954, any minister, priest, rabbi, or cleric who wanted to speak freely about the politics or the moral or the policy issues of the day, they could do so without any threat from the Federal Government. Well, in 1954 Lyndon Baynes Johnson put an amendment on a revenue bill going through the Senate that basically said that if you are a 501(c)(3), you may not have any type of speech that could be interpreted as

being somewhat of a political nature or a moral political nature.

I have problems with this, Madam Speaker, simply because the Constitution of the United States of America, the first amendment says that any individual, church, or any individual has the right to speak freely of whatever should come to their mind that they feel like they should mention to their fellow citizen or to a congregation. Again, if this was 1953, Madam Speaker, I would not be on the floor of the House, because there would be no problem. This whole problem came about in 1954. I do not want to go much into that history as I do want to go into the present.

Let me read the first paragraph of a pastoral letter from Bishop Sheridan, Colorado Springs, a Catholic bishop in Colorado. Three weeks ago he wrote a three-page letter. I just want to read one paragraph:

"Dear brothers and sisters in Christ. This coming November, Americans will participate in one of the most important national elections in recent history. The President, Senators, and Congressmen who are placed in office by our votes will serve at a time in which issues that are critical to the very survival of our civilization will be at the top of the political agenda. As we prepare for these elections, I consider it my duty as your bishop to write to you about these matters so that you might go to the polls this fall with a well-informed conscience."

Madam Speaker, I say that, and I am not going into any more of the letter, it is a three-page letter; but I will tell my colleagues that all this bishop did was to remind the parishioners in his diocese, the teachers of the church, and not only the church, but of Jesus Christ.

□ 1930

And that is all he did. But because he did this, he did not say Democrat or Republican, he did not say liberal or conservative, but he talked about pro-life issues.

Mr. Speaker, because he did that, Barry Lynn of the Americans for the Separation of Church and State, filed a complaint against this Bishop. Where is America going? Where is America going when a minister, a priest, or Rabbi or a cleric can not speak freely, which is a first amendment guarantee by our Constitution.

I am not going to go into the letter by Mr. Lind, but I will tell you that basically what he did is to chastise this Bishop because he spoke about the pro-life issues which are very important to our church. And I happen to be a Roman Catholic. I would say this if this was a minister, I would say this if it was a rabbi, they should have the freedom of speech that was guaranteed until 1954.

In addition to that, I want to also recite from Alex de Tocqueville, who came to America in 1830 and he loved America, this new republic, this freedom that we enjoy, and he talked